

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

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FM AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5728

INFO AMEMBASSY SUVA

GOVAMSAMOA PAGO PAGO

UNCLAS WELLINGTON 03081

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EAIR, WS

SUBJECT: CIVAIR, AIR SERVICE BETWEEN PAGO PAGO AND

- WESTERN SAMOA

REF: (A) WELLINGTON 2853, (B) WELLINGTON 2665,

- (C) STATE 1217099

1. UPON RECEIPT OF DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST FOR A REPORT ON CRASH OF SOUTH PACIFIC ISLANDS AIRWAYS (SPIA) AIRCRAFT (REF C), EMBASSY QUERIED ALL SOURCES OF INFORMATION HERE AND REQUESTED ADDITIONAL INFORMATION FROM THE AMERICAN CONSULAR AGENT IN APIA AND THE OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF AMERICAN SAMOA. (IN OUR REPORT TO WASHINGTON, REF B, WE NOTED THAT: "IT STRIKES US, GIVEN OUR DISTANCE FROM SAMOA, THAT OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR OF AMERICAN SAMOA IN PAGO PAGO MAY BE IN THE BEST POSITION TO PROVIDE YOU WITH FULLEST INFORMATION POSSIBLE.") AS A REPLY WAS RECEIVED ONLY FROM OUR CONSULAR AGENT IN APIA, WE TRANSMITTED THAT TO THE DEPARTMENT (REF A), ADDING THE GOVERNOR OF AMERICAN SAMOA AS AN INFO ADDRESSEE.

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2. YESTERDAY WE RECEIVED FROM AMEMBASSY SUVA A COPY OF A COMMERCIAL CABLE DATED JUNE 5 FROM MR. GEORGE WRAY TO AMBASSADOR CONDON. MR. WRAY, PRESIDENT OF SOUTH PACIFIC ISLAND AIRWAYS (SPIA) IN PAGO PAGO, STRONGLY STATES HIS DISAGREEMENT WITH THE INFORMATION PROVIDED BY OUR CONSULAR AGENT. IN ORDER THAT THE DEPARTMENT MIGHT HAVE THE FULLEST AND MOST ACCURATE

INFORMATION, WE ARE REPEATING IN PARA 3 BELOW THOSE PORTIONS OF MR. WRAY'S MESSAGE DEALING WITH SPIA'S OPERATION (AND OMITTING HIS CRITICAL COMMENTS CONCERNING THE CONSULAR AGENCY IN APIA AND EMBASSY WELLINGTON).

3. "CONTRARY TO AMCONSUL REPORT ALL THREE SPIA AIRCRAFT ARE IN SCHEDULED SERVICE. NO FLIGHT CANCELLATIONS EXCEPT 4 PAST 10 DAYS NIL TRAFFIC AND POLYNESIAN ALSO CANCELLED FOUR FLIGHTS SAME REASON. SINCE ACCIDENT 10 PERCENT DROP IN PPG/APW MARKET SHARE RAPIDLY RECOVERING. SPIA PURCHASED NEW 900,000 DOLLARS TWINOTTER TURBOPROP 17 FEBRUARY FOR DELIVERY 15 AUGUST.

SPIA CONSISTENTLY PROFITABLE HAS NO FINANCIAL PROBLEMS IN 5 YEAR HISTORY. 1977 UP 93 PERCENT OVER 1976 CARRYING 52,414 PASSENGERS TO POLYNESIAN 60,100. SPIA FIRST QUARTER 1978 UP 65 PERCENT OVER FIRST QUARTER 1977.

AS MATTER OF INTEREST BY SEPTEMBER WE WILL HAVE ELIMINATED ALL SMALL AIRCRAFT OPERATIONS REPLACING WITH DEHAVILLAND TURBOPROP EQUIPMENT. PLEASED TO ANSWER ANY INQUIRY." HEALY

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